

Plan to Reduce MacArthur Screeners Put Off

By Erik Holm
STAFF WRITER



August 26, 2003

The federal government's plans to cut the number of security screeners at Long Island MacArthur Airport nearly in half have been called off for now, Rep. Steve Israel announced yesterday.

Instead, 32 part-time screening jobs will be created at the Ronkonkoma airport, and some of the current full-time screeners, who number about 100, will voluntarily take a cut in hours to fill some of the part-time openings. It would leave 79 screeners working full time.

The federal Transportation Security Administration, which runs airport defense, had announced plans in April to cut 6,000 screeners nationwide, dropping from 55,600 to 49,600 by Sept. 30 to save \$288 million a year.

MacArthur was scheduled for some of the most severe cuts in the nation. Its screener work force, at 104 at the time the cuts were announced, was originally to be cut to 56. In June, the TSA revised that number to 63.

But in response to a letter written by Israel (D-Huntington), TSA Administrator James Loy wrote earlier this month that the ongoing expansion of the airport necessitated a review of the plans to cut the federal screeners.

"I have directed that no immediate reductions in force be applied to the ... screener work force," wrote Loy, a retired Coast Guard admiral.

He also said one of the department's industrial engineers would examine the possibility of increasing the number of metal detectors and baggage screening equipment.

Currently, construction is under way to add four new gates at the airport.

"The airport is undergoing a very significant expansion, so to remove screeners while increasing passengers ... just doesn't make sense," Israel said.

The idea of switching some screeners to part-time positions was suggested by the screeners themselves,

Israel said.

Copyright © 2003, [Newsday, Inc.](#)